The Power of Advocacy

For Persons with Special Needs and those involved in their care!

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DISCLAIMER

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Learning Objectives

This lively interactive workshop provides general summary information on advocacy. It recognizes that the best person to identify an individual's need is the individual! Emphasis is placed on the importance of speaking up on behalf of the minor child with disabilities while at the same time teaching the child as appropriate how to advocate for self. Participants will leave with an understanding of what it takes to be an effective advocate.

Participants will be able to:

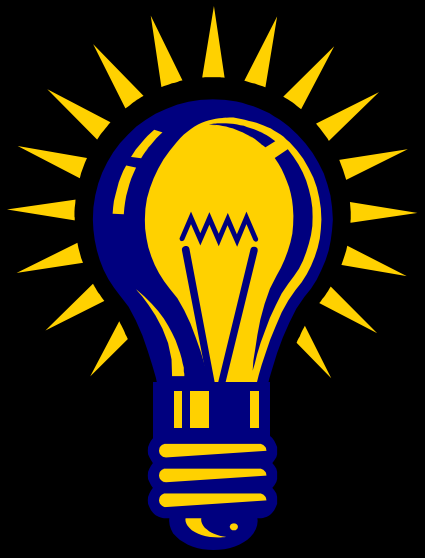
1. Define advocacy and understand how self-advocacy helps someone with disabilities.
2. Identify seven action steps in the advocacy process and seven qualities needed to be a good advocate.
3. Discuss five key methods used by advocates.

Age of Majority

- Regardless of the severity of a person's disability when an individual with disabilities reaches the age of majority/adulthood (which in most cases is the age of 18, but may vary from state to state)--all persons, including those with cognitive, intellectual and developmental disabilities--legally become adults and the natural guardianship of parents ends.

Advocacy is…

- Active support of an idea or cause.
- **The act of pleading or boldly expressing a point of view.**
- **A broad based analytical approach to problem solving designed to protect personal and legal rights, and to insure a dignified existence.**
- **The deliberate process of influencing those who make policy decisions.**



The practice of supporting someone to make their voice heard!

Types Of Advocacy

- System advocacy
  - *changing "the system"/promoting cause*
- Legal advocacy
  - *what lawyers are paid to do*
- Legislative advocacy
  - *designed to change laws*
- Individual advocacy
  - *advocating for another*
- Self-advocacy
  - *advocating for oneself*

A Self Advocate is…

A person who speaks up for himself or herself.

How Can Self-Advocacy Help Someone With Disabilities?

STARTING POINT…

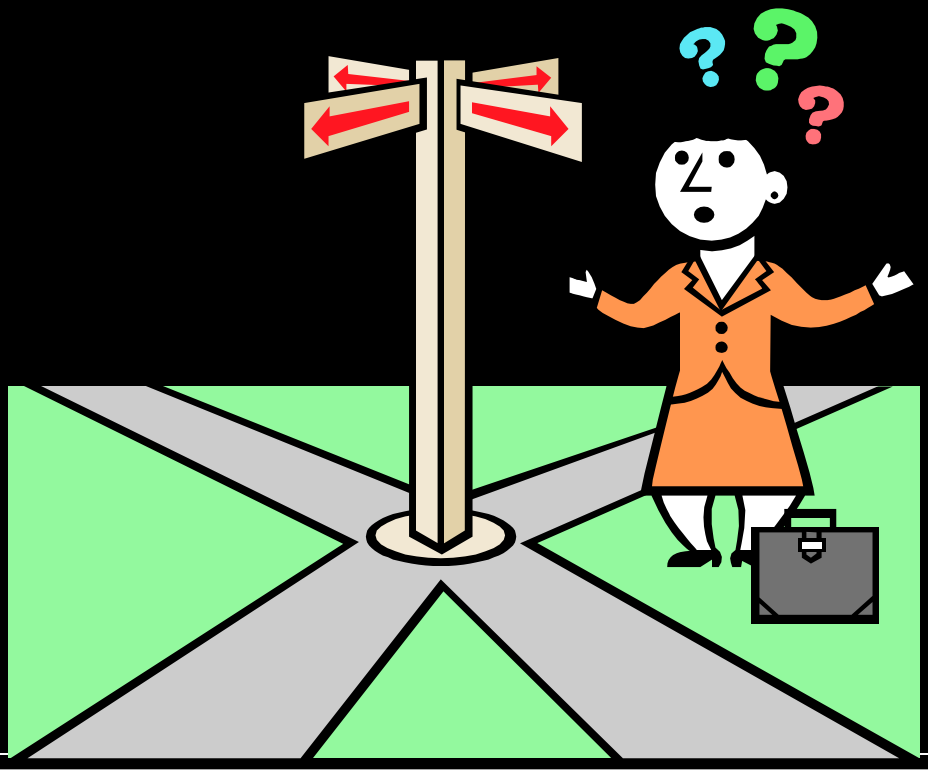
- Believe in yourself, your ability to achieve what is required, and your ability to persevere.

ADVOCACY ACTION STEPS

1. Do not use acronyms and technical terms that others may not understand!

ADVOCACY ACTION STEPS

2. Define the issue.



ADVOCACY ACTION STEPS

3. Get the Facts.
   - **Know the facts of the situation including disability strengths and weaknesses and the views of those who are working first handed with the situation.**

Good advocacy is based on _____ ___

ADVOCACY ACTION STEPS

4. Know your _____ _____ and _____ as well as appropriate _____ and _____.

ADVOCACY ACTION STEPS

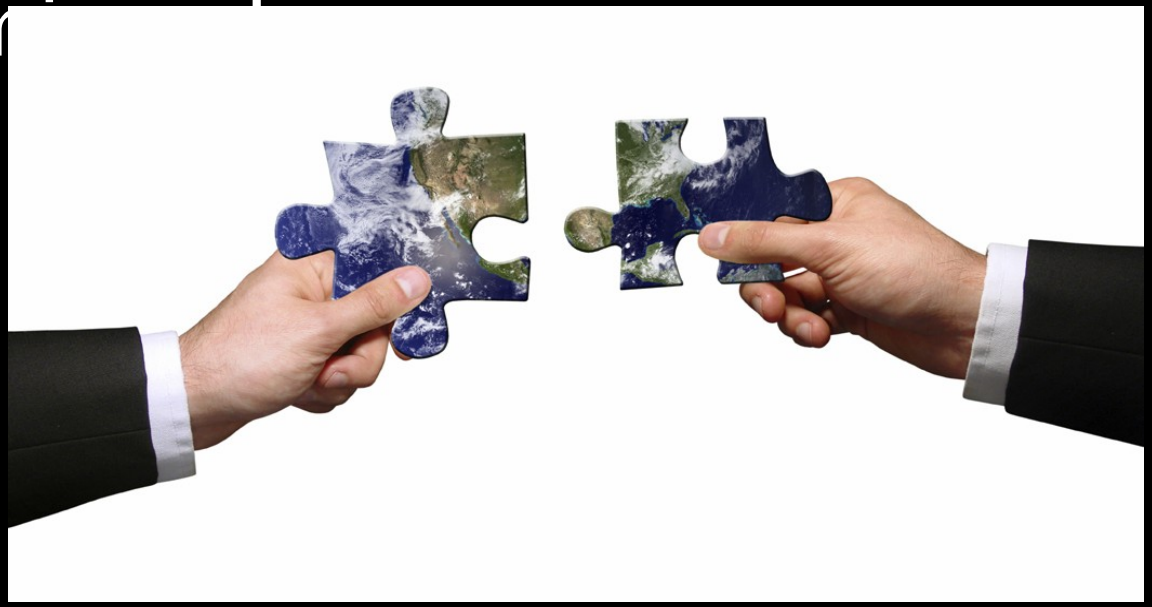
5. Develop an Action Plan.
   - **Be open to _____ _____**
   - **Proactively Build Support**
     - **Identify key _____, _____, and _____ _____.**
     - **Recognize potential obstacles— _____,_____, _____, _____**
     - **Network: _____**
   - **Set SMART goals**

ADVOCACY ACTION STEPS

6. Develop and Deliver the Message.
   - **What specifically do you want to convey?**
   - **Tailor to specific target audience.**
   - **What result do you want?**
     - There may be more than one way to get what you want.

ADVOCACY ACTION STEPS

7. Monitor and evaluate progress. And, evaluate your successes & m



Supplies of an Advocate

- Three-ring binder
- Three hold punch
- Contact log
- Calendar
- Highlighters
- Pens/Pencils
- Sticky notes
- #10 envelopes
- Stamps
- Affirmations/books of inspiration

How To Be a Good Advocate

Prepare

- Define the problem.
- Gather necessary information.
- Develop goals and set objectives.
- Decide what you think can be done to solve it.
  - When you can figure out what should be done, there's a better change of a successful outcome.
  - Make a checklist and prioritize.
- Brainstorm with others.

How To Be a Good Advocate

Prepare

- Identify legal requirements.
  - i.e., notices/reports that must be received, individuals required to participate, time deadline that apply, etc.
- Gather appropriate materials.
  - medical records, evaluations, IEP, school performance/progress reports, standardized test results, notes from meetings/conversations, copies of laws, policies, etc.
- Develop questions to be addressed.
- Make appointments
  - **Confirm the day before.**

How To Be a Good Advocate

Keep Documentation and Records

"If it is not written down, it was not said"

- Keep written records of all meetings, telephone calls, and written communications about your condition. You are entitled to copies of your medical and rehabilitation records--ask for copies.
- Make request in writing, (do not have to be typed).
- Send important letters with Return Receipt Requested.
  - For hand-delivered materials, note date, time, recipient
- Do not rely on phone calls or casual conversations alone.
  - Keep record of verbal conversation: date, time, name/position, decisions.
    - Ask for written confirmations of any promises
- Keep copies of all correspondences.
- Organize your records in a notebook or binder.

How To Be a Good Advocate

- Know the decision-makers and what motivates them.
- Build positive relationships
- Stay informed
- Stay connected
- Use every opportunity to learn and share information about your job, the disability or special need

How To Be a Good Advocate

Use Meeting Time Effectively

- **Be polite, courteous, and on time.**
- **Sit across from decision-makers.**
- **Take notes.**
- **Say what you want in your own words.**
- **Ask questions! Get answers!**
- **Take time to make good decisions.**
- **End meetings with a plan of action/next steps.**
  - Get written confirmation of decisions and who was present.

How To Be a Good Advocate

Use Resources Creatively

- When appropriate, use the chain of command.
- Find others with your concerns, and approach the problem as a group.
- Look for other programs or resources that may help.
- Learn from other's experiences.
  - Talk about what works and what don't.

When PCSing, call ahead to learn of resources or research options

[MilitaryHomefront

[http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil]

How To Be a Good Advocate

Follow-Up

- **Keep track of deadlines. Follow up to ensure that all parties have fulfilled their obligations.**
- **Report on progress as well as problems.**
- **Be firm about timelines but patient enough to accomplish what is needed within those timelines.**

Show Appreciation:

People likes to feel appreciated. Find creative ways to say “Thank You” to those who have helped you!

A Good Advocate …

- Observes
- Listens attentively
- Notes how something is said and what is not said
- Questions
- Provides Information
- Requests Advice
- Respects reasonable time limits at all meetings
- Requests clarification and further information
- Expresses self in an assertive, organized manner
- Records what is said, when, by whom, and expected follow-up
- Is organized

- Ensures all parties are equally aware of all the facts
- Provides feedback and encourages others to give opinions
- Develop personal relationships
- Maintain open communication (telephone call, notes, casual meetings) for good news as well as concerns
- Is polite, courteous, and on time
- Is patient
- Internalizes The Security Prayer
- Takes care of self!

Story Telling as a Method of Advocacy

Advocacy is both an art and a science. There are no strict rules for advocacy work. Activists use similar advocacy strategies on the local, community, state, or national level!

Tell Your Story!

- Every story teaches others
  - concentrate on lessons learned from your experience.
    - Give enough background so others can feel what you experienced.

Some of the drama, humor, “blood, sweat,
and tears” can make the story come alive

Tell Your Story

- Don’t be afraid the tell how you messed up.
  - **Everybody does. If you are open about mistakes you made, people may be more inclined to believe you when your tell about your “smart moves”.**
    - **Some important lessons in life are opportunities missed and human failings.**
      - **Give others the benefit of these lessons.**
      - **No pity parties**

Coalition & Alliance Building

- Build a network with others who share your journey or who share an interest.
- Bring together people working with different agendas into your network.
- Consider unlikely allies.
  - **Identify common interests.**
  - **Look beyond tradition partners.**

Information Dissemination & Communication

Promote widespread awareness of issues:

- **Newsletters, alerts, flyers, posters, ads, etc.**
- **Innovative systems/on-line electronic communication**
- **Letters to the editor**

  - **Multiple letters from different persons**
    - **Focus on different aspects of issue**
  - **Don’t attack persons with different vie**
    - **Keep the focus on the big issue.**

Media Advocacy and Lobbying

- Publicize/enhance awareness of your issue using the media.
  - Look for opportunities to connect special needs issues with coverage about other events.
- Most elected officials try to reflect their constituents wishes as they understand them.
  - Get to know your Congresspersons and delegates.

NOTE: TRICARE Policy is based on statutory regulations. To change TRICARE Policy requires an act of Congress.

Grassroots Organizing

- Helps people with disabilities make a difference in the quality of community life for all persons with disabilities.
  - Provides opportunities for individuals with disabilities and/or their family members to be leaders in the disability advocacy movement.
- Look for creative ways to inspire interest and action from others.

Tell Your Story

The "Bottom Line"

- Everyone has a story—tell it!
  - Problem solve!
    - Problem solve!
      - Problem Solve!
  - Know your legal rights.
  - Keep your eye on the prize!
    - Avoid getting sidetracked by personal conflicts
    - Focus on the here and now
  - Do not get bogged down in "legalese".
- The person living "the journey" is the expert!

The Power of Advocacy

For Persons with Special Needs and those involved in their care!

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